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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a study in which a select bibliography of gay fiction was compiled and checked against the catalogs of the public libraries in Franklin County, Ohio, in order to determine the collection extent and whether catalog subject access is provided for these works. Results show that the percentage of checklist titles held by each library varied widely, with little subject access being provided for the titles by all libraries studied. Suggestions for further research are presented. In addition, a brief history of the publishing of gay literature is presented and societal issues affecting the collection of gay and lesbian materials are examined. A literature review discusses collection development and subject access to lesbian and gay fictional works. Checklist-based research is also discussed in the literature review. Appendices include: a list of Franklin County Public Libraries; the checklist of gay fiction monographs, compiled from the preceding 10 years of the Lambda Literary Awards; the checklist with holdings of seven individual libraries and consortium, numbers of reviews in "Book Review Index" and five major review sources; and subject headings coded by library. (Contains 29 references.) (DLS)

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Out of the Closet and onto the Shelves: A Checklist Study of Gay Fiction in Public Libraries in Franklin County, Ohio

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library
and Information Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

by

David G. Schneider

October 1998

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Abstract: A brief history of the publishing of gay literature in the United States is presented. Additionally, societal issues affecting the collection of gay and lesbian materials are examined. The literature review describes issues of importance for libraries to consider for gay and lesbian patrons: collection development and subject access to lesbian and gay fictional works. Through the review of the literature, it was discovered that there is little previous library-related research regarding service to gay and lesbian patrons; most of the research is recent, published since 1992. Checklist-based research is also discussed in the literature review. A bibliography of gay fiction is compiled and a checklist-based study is performed in order to determine: the collection extent of gay fiction in public libraries in Franklin County, Ohio, and whether catalog subject access is being provided for these fictional works of gay fiction. Data results show that the percentage of checklist titles held by each library varies widely, with little subject access being provided for the titles by all of the libraries studied. Suggestions for further related research are presented.

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INTRODUCTION

The modern gay and lesbian rights movement is said to have begun in June of 1969 in New York City. The Stonewall Inn, a Greenwich Village gay bar, was raided by police; patrons were then arrested, not an uncommon occurrence in 1969. Bar patrons and street observers then began to demonstrate, which quickly turned into a riot. The disturbance lasted for four nights.

As the gay rights movement took hold, people have been interested in reclaiming gay and lesbian lives that have been hidden from history for far too long. Reclaiming gay and lesbian lives recorded and preserved in both fiction and nonfiction writings. Since the late 1970's, there has been an open and growing interest in the writings of gays and lesbians. Before the late 1970's, a work of gay fiction might occasionally be published in America. E. M. Forester, Evelyn Waugh, Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Jean Genet, Christopher Isherwood, and James Baldwin would write works with homosexual themes or characters. The homosexual characters or themes were often implied, and thus closeted in these early works; the word "homosexual" might not even appear in the works. "Because homosexuality was still a crime in England when Forster wrote *Maurice* [in 1913], he never published it in his lifetime. And yet for half a century, this deeply subversive novel was passed from hand to hand: he shared the manuscript with his friends....In the end, probably as many people read *Maurice* in manuscript as would have done so had Forster....paid to have a private edition of the novel printed" (Mitchell and Leavitt 1998, xviii). In the early part of the century, such writings might be self-published or were never commercially published, and the "pages passed from hand to hand."

Even toward mid-century, the situation had not greatly improved. "When Gore Vidal's novel *The City and the Pillar* was published in 1948, *The New York Times* not only refused to run ads for it, because of the book's theme, male homosexuality, but also refused to review it" (Rutledge 1996, 155). Even though *The City and the Pillar* made it into print, Vidal was required by his publisher to change the end to a tragic ending (Hogan and Hudson 1998).

However, in 1978 three breakthrough novels were published by large, established commercial publishers that have since become milestones for what now is known as the genre

"gay fiction." Andrew Holleran's *Dancer from the Dance*, Edmund White's *Nocturnes for the King of Naples* and Larry Kramer's *Faggots* were published within months of each other. All sold reasonably well, and equally important, two of the novels introduced gay men to contemporary fictional characters leading openly gay lives. Since that time, gay (and lesbian) publishing has increasingly experienced a boom. "Gay and lesbian literature has experienced an awakening....Prior to the 1950's, only underground titles existed. Today, literature for gay men and lesbians is out of the closet and into the bookstores, and gay and lesbian readers are openly reading and enjoying both fiction and nonfiction that reflect their newly found freedom and lifestyles" (Kilpatrick 1996, 72). Gay and lesbian publishing has grown into a multimillion dollar industry in less than twenty-five years (Sanborn 1995). Clearly, gay and lesbian literature and publishing has made great strides in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

In the "ALA Policy Manual," contained within the *ALA Handbook of Organization* (1987), the American Library Association has drafted explicit policies against discrimination regarding the development of collections, patrons, and employees on the basis of sexual orientation. While that ALA has taken a strong stance in support of diversity in service towards gay and lesbian patrons, it seems that in practice many libraries are not so aggressive in their positions concerning sexual orientation and diversity of collections and service. "With a philosophy and tradition of anti-discrimination to maintain, it seems logical that libraries should be the first bastion of support for gay and lesbian library service and literature. But this has not always been the case" (Kilpatrick 1996, 72), and may very well continue to be the situation today.

In a poll of 250 public and college libraries done in Spring of 1995 by *Library Journal*, 14 percent of the respondents stated that their libraries carried no monographs with gay and lesbian themes. "Of the 157 libraries that were able to quantify both their total library holdings and books with gay and lesbian content, 79 (50 percent) had no more than 30 titles, 41 (26 percent) had 15 or fewer, 21(13 percent) had between 150 and 500, and only 16 (10 percent) had more than 500 titles" (Bryant 1995, 37). Perhaps the librarians were not familiar with gay and lesbian literature and authors. It is also distressing that the librarians might not know their own collections in order to provide knowledgeable service to their gay and lesbian patrons. One of

the respondents questioned if this was a topic that *Library Journal* should address. A collection development librarian from the Northwest, who asked that her library not be named, was quoted as saying "Our ability to have even these materials must be balanced against too much publicity" (Bryant 1995, 37). By her own calculations, the library's gay and lesbian materials comprised just over one tenth of one percent of the entire collection.

American gay men and lesbians are raised in a society which often portrays them as either negative or invisible. "It is not unusual for men who have recently identified themselves as gay to not have any idea of what *being* gay is all about" (Harsh 1992, 31). As library users, the information needs of this user group often serve to validate and affirm gay and lesbian lives and experiences. Those questioning their own sexual identities might use these materials in order to realize that there are, and have been throughout the ages, millions of lesbian and gay men leading normal, worthwhile lives while making valuable contributions to society. These materials can promote feelings self-worth and acceptance. This is especially critical for gay and lesbian youth. It has been estimated that one third of successful teen-age suicides can be attributed to sexual orientation issues (Tuhus 1997). For lesbian and gay men, availability of and access to lesbian and gay materials are equally as important as other minority groups' rights of service in public libraries.

The field of librarianship has been slow to acknowledge the needs of gay and lesbian patrons. Public collections, and access to these collections, are often inadequate. "....gay and lesbian library users have entered the 1990's facing the sobering fact that although they (and their families, their friends, and other people in contact with them) *use libraries*, there are still wide and often total information gaps in libraries about subjects of intense interest to them. The persistence of these gaps twenty years after the beginning of the modern-day gay liberation movement in this country clearly shows the tragic extent of our profession's failure to respond to the legitimate information needs of library users (Gough and Greenblatt 1990, 10). Little research has been done in the field of librarianship concerning gay and lesbian library service. Most of the existing research "....emphasizes the need for improved holdings and access, and examines the difficulty of developing adequate gay and lesbian collections in each type of library" (Kilpatrick 1996, 72).

A multitude of reasons are responsible for the inadequate collections. Selection librarians may not be free of prejudice, not know the materials, not wish controversy, or be indifferent to the needs of the user group.

Access to these materials has been hindered by LC subject headings that are often obsolete and/or biased, and a majority of the journal literature of gays and lesbians suffers from a lack of indexing in standard indexing tools (Kilpatrick 1996, 80) . As a result, gay and lesbian materials that are represented in collections are needlessly difficult to identify. Additionally, gay and lesbian patrons are out of luck entirely in attempting to identify gay and lesbian *belles-lettres*, as are any other minority, for that matter.

> The near universal library practice of not assigning subject headings to fictional works also interferes with access to lesbian and gay literary works, limiting patrons to titles and authors with which they are already familiar. While this practice has begun to change lately with projects by Library of Congress and OCLC to add subject headings to new works of fiction, the bibliographic records for older works still lack access...
>
> Another bibliographic obstacle for gay and lesbian library users is the negligence of cataloging agencies to record the contents of anthologies in their catalog records. Such contents information is easily keyword-searchable in many online catalogs....Since a large percentage of books with gay and lesbian themes are published in the anthology format, this failure to reflect their contents is an especially significant access barrier (Greenblatt and Gough 1994, 205).

So with the current practice of not assigning specific subject headings to works of gay and lesbian fiction, it is extremely difficult to identify these works in libraries today. Users must either be familiar with the genre and its authors, or spend an inordinate amount of time browsing rows and rows of the spines of fiction monographs; even then patrons will miss titles that are checked out of the library. Clearly this is very haphazard approach to using the fiction collections. Some progressive libraries produce pathfinders for their gay and lesbian patrons. By using such pathfinders, the patrons are still limited by the quality and updating of such pathfinders.

Columbus, Ohio, (located in Franklin County) has an unusually strong gay and lesbian community. "National media--*The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and CBS News, for instance--have recognized the strength of Columbus's gay community. It's organized, political and visible" (Newkirk 1993, 83). A thriving gay and lesbian community "'....despite a national

reputation for flag-waving conservatism and religious devotion to football," said a story in *The New York Times Magazine....*' (Newkirk 1993, 83).

Within this conservative community, there is a thriving subset of the Franklin County population that has unique information needs that differ from (and some might argue, at odds with) the rest of the population. This study will examine public libraries in Franklin County, Ohio, for holdings of contemporary adult gay fiction titles. A select bibliography of gay fiction will be compiled and checked against the catalogs of the public libraries. Additionally, the existing subject headings for each title will be examined for potential access points that would direct a patron to works of adult gay fiction.

This study is exploratory in nature, intended to investigate current practice in the observed libraries. The study will not be intended to document the existence of bias or censorship, nor prescribe what titles be included in the libraries' collections. Additionally, it will not prescribe that fiction be classified, nor prescribe what subject headings be assigned to adult gay fiction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Surprisingly, there is little research in the field of librarianship that wholly concerns itself with gay and lesbian services and collections, and most of the existing research alludes to the lack of previous research. Most of the published research is recent, published since 1992. This is a very young aspect of librarianship that is just beginning to be explored.

Clearly what makes this issue unique are our attitudes towards morality, and sexuality. Heterosexism explains much of American society's prejudices towards gay and lesbian issues. "Heterosexism is the belief in the inherent superiority of heterosexuality and its right to dominance" (Gough and Greenblatt 1992, 60). Since these prejudices are not based on any physical traits or characteristics of race or nationality, these beliefs are often insidious and hard to recognize. Obviously these attitudes influence the library decision makers and the public alike. Concerning the diversity of library collections, research has shown that books challenging the sexual mores meet with more resistance than books that challenge other areas for the selection librarians and the public alike (Leon 1973, Sweetland and Christensen 1995). As recently as

1993, ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom indicated that "....the topic of homosexuality was the number one reason why books and other library materials were challenged...." (*American Libraries* 1994, 372).

The American Library Association has authored specific guidelines for collection development librarians in the *Library Bill of Rights*. The document provides that "libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues" (American Library Association, Office for Intellectual Freedom 1992, 3). This provides the basis for much of the debate concerning controversial titles in American libraries.

In American libraries, heterosexism promotes internal and external censorship of collections, and affects collection development decisions by rejection of gay and lesbian materials. Since homosexuality is one of the "hot topics" in library collections (Leon 1973, 1081), these materials are obviously considered "controversial." In 1971, a national survey was conducted concerning librarians' attitudes toward sexual content in library materials. Gay and lesbian sexual content met with the most opposition (Pope, 1974).

Self-censorship by selection librarians, conscious or unconscious, is a factor in the rejection of controversial library materials (Gorman 1987, Gough and Greenblatt 1992). Leon (1973) found that librarians are more conservative with issues of morality than other issues. As a result, they are more anxious and cautious in selection decisions and tend to reject "questionable" materials in order to avoid controversy (Leon 1973). Caution is also mentioned in the research of Moon from the 1960's.

Other factors come into play concerning the absence of certain materials from library collections. Difficulty in obtaining (questionable) materials is one factor (Gorman 1987). Moon (1962) indicated that lack of title knowledge (ignorance) was a repeated survey response from librarians, as well as a lack of public demand. Lack of monies, literary merit (quality), author integrity and unacceptable subject content were also mentioned in Moon's research as reasons for rejecting materials. For Moon, it was disturbing that title ignorance was so often found in the research results. Concerning demand, "...doesn't the average library buy many books not specifically requested by readers?" (Moon 1962, 490). Often however, the biggest determinant in selection decisions is the quantity of published reviews (Moon 1962, Serebnick and Quinn

1995).

Serebnick's study of adult nonfiction found that "there is a strong positive relationship between the number of reviews a book receives and the inclusion of that book in libraries. As expected, books with a higher number of reviews are owned in significantly more libraries than are books with fewer reviews" (Serebnick 1981, 400). It seems that a title with a higher number of reviews has a higher potential of coming to the attention of more librarians. Ms. Serebnick found that there was no relationship between the direction of reviews (positive, neutral or negative), and the number of titles purchased. Additionally, the study found that when both the number and direction of reviews is controlled for, controversial titles do not require a significantly higher number of reviews in order to be purchased than randomly selected titles.

Concerning the rejection of gay and lesbian materials, Leon found the authors that were "omitted or restricted in impressive quantities....deal explicitly with homosexual behavior on fictional, autobiographical and other levels" (Leon 1973, 1083). He further states that unawareness is a "sizeable factor" in the absence of controversial titles and that "unawareness covers a wide stretch of territory, ranging from ignorance to indifference" (Leon 1973, 1089). Gough and Greenblatt (1992) note additional reasons given by surveyed librarians for not purchasing these materials. Lack of awareness that lesbian and gay patrons reside in their community, and the problems associated with purchasing unfamiliar materials for an unfamiliar patron base.

In the studies of Moon (1962), Serebnick (1981), and Serebnick and Quinn (1995), five journals are repeatedly mentioned that were used frequently by librarians for selection decisions: *Kirkus Reviews, Booklist, Library Journal, Publisher's Weekly,* and *The New York Time Book Review*.

In the literature of gay and lesbian librarianship, Sweetland and Christensen (1995) found in their study that gay and lesbian themed books are reviewed less than randomly selected titles. They note however that the lack of holdings of lesbian and gay books is not the result of a lack of review in "mainstream" sources, nor ignorance of the titles on the part of the librarians. They suggest that there is rejection by librarians and librarian-oriented review media of such materials, due to either homophobia, or attempts to avoid controversy. Additionally, Sweetland and

Christensen found that "....when a gay or lesbian title does get reviewed, there is little evidence of either anti-gay bias or of an attempt to unduly emphasize or conceal the content. Thus, reviewer bias would not appear to be a factor in influencing libraries to purchase books" (1995, 39). Finally, "....regardless of comments and recommendations in reviews, and even when controlling for number of reviews, such books are purchased by substantially fewer libraries than would be expected. This certainly suggests a possibility of some sort of bias on the part of the librarians" (1995, 39).

Studies that research library collections often use a checklist-based approach to evaluate collections. A checklist is compiled, and then a library's collection is evaluated against the titles on the checklist to see if they are held by the library. Judith Serebnick has researched more than twenty checklist-based studies in "Self-Censorship by Librarians: An Analysis of Checklist-Based Research," published in 1982. In Serebnick's study, these checklists include titles that are considered controversial, and the findings often hope to identify self-censorship by librarians, or diversity of the collections. Twenty to fifty titles appear on a majority of the checklists. Most researchers in these studies fail to state how many of the titles from their checklists should be held by the libraries, although a few believe that all should be included in the collections. Previous research by Moon indicated that in the opinion of the researchers the libraries should hold at least 11 out of 20 checklist titles (Moon 1962, 488). Serebnick cautions that self-censorship has not been adequately defined in the literature of librarianship, and thus difficult to prove. Additionally, "more attention must be paid to the conceptualization and to the construction and use of checklists" (Serebnick, 1982, 51). Often there is little discussion as to how the checklists are compiled, and their compilation is often arbitrary. When compiled by special interest groups for the purposes of evaluating collections, such checklists can be exclusive and subjective. Finally, the results of such studies vary considerably, and are often subject to the interpretations of the researchers.

In 1998, Combs studied seven public libraries in Franklin County, Ohio; these are the same library collections to be researched in this study. Combs used the checklist-based approach to check the holdings of the libraries against a bibliography of gay and lesbian related nonfiction monographs. She found that of 117 titles on the checklist, library holdings range from three

percent to fifty-one percent of the titles. Additionally, she found that eighty percent of the 117 titles had been reviewed in the media. However, "the percentage of ownership of reviewed materials increases only marginally compared to ownership of the complete core list" (Combs 1998, 16). This contradicts the findings of Serebnick from 1981.

Combs also found that forty-two percent of the 117 titles were not owned by any of the public libraries within Franklin County. Gay male focus titles comprise twelve percent of not owned titles, while titles with a lesbian focus comprise forty-three percent of not owned titles. Non-gender specific titles make up the remaining forty-five percent of the not owned monographs of libraries in Franklin County.

Subject classification of fiction remains little used and little researched. "Librarians such as E. A. Baker stressed the importance of organizing fiction: 'If this class of books has more readers, appeals more strongly to the emotions, and consequently is a far more potent influence on manners and conduct, on taste and the spread of ideas, then the librarian is justified in spending not less, but more pains in arranging, classifying and annotating them'" (Harrell 1985). A major problem concerning the classification of fiction is distinguishing what a work is of, rather than what the work is about. For example, "Gay men--Fiction" would be assigned to fictional works with gay themes and characters, rather than works that discuss the topic of gay literature.

The major goal of fiction classification is to direct users to the specific type of fiction they enjoy reading. Additionally, they might be introduced to new authors in the same fiction category that might have been overlooked. Without fiction classification, users must browse books (and often just book spines) on the shelves, a hit or miss approach for individuals seeking a specific type of fiction. Often patrons suffer from information overload when browsing for fiction (Baker 1988). The existing research has found that fiction classification does increase use of the fiction collection (Baker 1988, Shepard and Baker 1987). Most fiction classification methods involve labeling fiction type on the spine, breaking-out fiction types into separate sections, or classification by fiction type in the catalog (Harrell 1985). None of the existing research investigated the topical category of gay or lesbian fiction in their studies.

Olderr's Fiction Subject Headings (1991) originated as a supplementary thesaurus

providing recommended fiction subject headings that are consistent and compatible with the *Library of Congress Subject Headings*. At the time of *Olderr's* publication, *LCSH* was not assigning subject headings to individual works of fiction. However, in 1997, the 20th edition of *LCSH* was changed to allow for use of fiction as a subheading for individual works of fiction about "classes of persons" (*LCSH* 1997, 1946). "Gay men" is considered a class of person. Consequently , using the 20th ed. of the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* and its subdivisions, the following headings can be constructed: Gay men--Fiction, and Gays'--Fiction. Additionally, headings can be constructed by further word additions following the word Gay. For example, Gay fathers--Fiction, Gay couples--Fiction, Gay male couples--Fiction.

Since there is little previous research regarding adult gay fiction in American libraries, this study is exploratory. Since it is limited in scope geographically, it will therefore not be generalizable to a larger population. However, one goal of the study is to continue and expand the dialog about gay and lesbian fiction and nonfiction in American libraries.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study used a list of gay fiction titles to check holdings of public libraries in Franklin County, Ohio. Franklin County was chosen because of its strong gay and lesbian population, as previously discussed. Public libraries were chosen to study since they typically have strong fiction collections, and being public institutions, would be expected to have diverse collections.

The research objectives were:

1. to determine availability of a select list of gay men's fiction at public libraries in Franklin County, Ohio. The list of public libraries appears in Appendix A.
2. to quantify the number of reviews of each title on the checklist, since number of reviews can affect acquisition.
3. to determine whether each title on the checklist has subject headings assigned that would identify these works as gay fiction in each of the libraries' catalogs.

For the study, a fifty title checklist was compiled from the category of Gay Fiction from the preceding ten years of the Lambda Literary Awards. The list of the fifty titles can be found in Appendix B. The publishing years of the titles on the checklist range from 1988 to 1997. The Lambda Literary Awards, presented for the last ten years, are sponsored by the *Lambda Book Report*, a bimonthly journal devoted to gay, lesbian and bisexual literature. Annually, titles are nominated as representing the best in various categories of gay, lesbian and bisexual literature from the preceding year, including Gay Fiction. Nominated titles are English language titles, distributed in the United States. A finalists committee narrows the number of nominated titles for each category down to five titles. In theory, the fifty title checklist represents some of the "best" gay fiction from the past ten years. Thus, it would seem that these titles should be represented in the collections of public libraries in Franklin County, Ohio. It should be noted, however, that the potential exists of a pro-gay bias in using a compiled title checklist from the Lambda Literary Award nominated titles. The resulting bibliography is somewhat subjective and exclusive. Differing results might be obtained by a by the use of a checklist composed of gay fiction more randomly selected for use in the checklist. On the other hand, such a checklist of the "best" of gay fiction titles might have the effect of being too well represented in the libraries' collections, one possible limitation of the study. Also, it might be expected that titles from a "best" bibliography might be reviewed in greater numbers than more randomly selected titles. Finally, using *Library of Congress Subject Headings*, 20th ed., the existence of subject headings of the variations of Gay and Fiction were recorded.

Finally, it should be emphasized that this study is limited to gay men's fiction. A study of lesbian fiction may produce differing results. Additionally, fiction is not a complete representation of a library's collection. Nonfiction, reference materials, and serials also need examined in order to fully evaluate a library's collection of gay materials.

METHODOLOGY

Using unobtrusive methods of testing, the collections of seven public library systems in

Franklin County, Ohio, were checked against a prepared bibliography of gay fiction monographs. A title was marked as being held by a library if the library owns any edition of the work. Multiple copies of a title have not been noted. As previously established, gay and lesbian literature remains a controversial topic for library collections. A checklist-based method of research was designed in order to determine availability of such controversial works in these libraries. Some previous research has shown that number of reviews affects acquisition decisions; *Book Review Index* was used in the study to quantify the total number of media reviews received by the checklist group. Additionally, a tally was taken of the number of reviews that each title received in the five most frequently used journals by selections librarians, according to Moon, Serebnick and Quinn, to determine if the number of reviews may have had any influence on acquisitions. The five journals are: *Booklist, Kirkus Reviews, Library Journal, New York Times Book Review, and Publisher's Weekly*. Finally, subject headings for all checklist titles were reviewed in order to document catalog subject access to works of gay fiction. The number of headings directing a user to works of gay fiction were tallied.

POPULATION

The location selected for this study was Franklin County, Ohio. The seven public library systems within Franklin County comprise the population. The greater Columbus area comprises much of Franklin County in Central Ohio. As recognized by the national media, Columbus has a thriving gay and lesbian community. In theory, publicly supported library systems are obligated to provide diverse collections to their patrons, diverse collections that represent controversial viewpoints. The purpose of the study was to document availability of and access to gay fiction in public libraries in Franklin County, Ohio.

Columbus Metropolitan Library (CML), Southwest Public Libraries and Worthington Public Library act as a consortium by sharing their online catalogs and their collections. Titles not owned by a particular library system can be transferred between the three library systems, as well as between CML locations. While titles may not be owned, access to the number of titles is thus increased. By sharing the online catalogs, catalog records are identical for monographs that are held by each system. Resultingly, subject access points will be identical for those

monographs that are held by each library system. The data results are reported individually as well as reported at the consortium level, since the libraries do share materials and catalogs.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

As described earlier, the title checklist was compiled from the past ten years of nominated titles in the category of Gay Fiction from the Lambda Literary Awards. Since these represent the best of the category, it seems that these titles should be represented in the collections. The annual nomination of titles represents honoring excellence in gay, lesbian and bisexual literature.

Forty-seven of the fifty title checklist are published by major publishers, and would be expected to be readily obtained. Only three of the monographs, *Cultural Revolution, Iowa,* and *Music I Never Dreamed Of,* are published by smaller presses, and might possibly have posed some difficulty in obtaining. Thus there should have been little chance of the represented titles in the checklist being absent from the collections due to difficulty in obtaining. Additionally, as a vast majority are from major publishers, it would seem that lack of title knowledge would not have come into play for the librarians making selection decisions.

Book Review Index was consulted to quantify the number of reviews for each title from the checklist. Additionally, *BRI* was consulted for reviews of the fifty titles in the five journals used frequently by selection librarians as noted by Moon, Serebnick and Quinn: *Booklist, Kirkus Reviews, Library Journal, New York Times Book Review, and Publisher's Weekly.* As previously discussed, Serebnick's 1981 study indicated "...a strong, positive relationship between the number of reviews a book receives and the inclusion of that book in libraries (Serebnick 1981, 400).

LIMITATIONS

Potential limitations of the study include:

1. the titles could have been owned at one point in time, but since weeded from any of the seven collections.

2. the compiled checklist, being the "best" of gay fiction, might be skewed in the direction of being overly represented in the collections.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data in table 1 show the number of monographs held by each library and the corresponding percentages of the fifty titles on the list that each library owns. The combined holdings of Columbus Metropolitan Library, Southwest Public Library, and the Worthington Public Library are represented in the data analysis tables under the heading "Consortium." Columbus Metropolitan Library had the highest percentage of titles owned (number of books owned by each library divided by the total number of titles on the bibliography) of any of the individual libraries at 94 percent. The consortium held 96 percent of the checklist titles. Two of the libraries held less than 50 percent -- Southwest Public Library (30 percent) and Grandview Heights Public Library (44 percent). The checklist and research results are presented in Appendix C. From this study, CML's collection of gay fiction appears very strong. Four of the seven individual library collections held 66 percent or above of the checklist titles. Franklin County residents will have different degrees of success in obtaining gay fiction from the public libraries in the county.

Table 1: Gay fiction monographs from core bibliography owned by each library.

	INDIVIDUAL LIBRARY							
Titles owned n=50	Bexley	Columbus	Grandview	Southwest	U. Arlington	Westerville	Worthington	CONSORTIUM
Number	33	47	22	15	35	27	43	48
Percentage	66%	94%	44%	30%	70%	54%	86%	96%

Gay fiction ownership percentages were much higher than the findings of Combs' study of gay and lesbian nonfiction monographs in the same libraries. Nonfiction percentages range from 3-51 percent of a 117 title checklist, while the fiction percentages for the individual libraries in this study range from 30-94 percent. The specific findings of each study are not

applicable to each other, as Combs' study included both gay and lesbian materials, fiction and nonfiction, while this study is of only gay fiction. In both studies, however, Columbus Metropolitan Library ranked first among individual libraries in holding the highest percentage of titles from each checklist, while Southwest ranked last with the lowest percentage of ownership of the checklists' titles. In looking at both studies, two questions arise: are gay fiction and nonfiction materials collected in higher numbers than similar materials of lesbian interest? Is gay fiction collected in higher numbers than lesbian fiction? Combs' study did report on nonfiction titles that were not owned by any Franklin County library, broken down by focus--lesbian or gay male. Of the 49 titles not owned, 12 percent had a gay male focus, 43 percent had a lesbian focus, and 45 percent were non-gender specific. The total number of monographs on Combs' checklist was 117.

As indicated in *BRI*, 98 percent of the checklist titles were reviewed in at least one media source. Only one of the titles from the list, *Iowa*, failed to garner any media reviews, thus 49 of 50 titles on the checklist received at least one media review. Edmund White's 1988 *The Beautiful Room Is Empty* received the highest number (21) of media reviews. The strong media showing may have been a result of the choice of titles for the checklist, judged to be the "best" of gay fiction. It might be expected that these titles would be more likely to have been reviewed. As a result of the titles garnering at least one media review, the percentage of library ownership of reviewed titles (calculated by determining the number of reviewed books as indicated in *BRI* and held by a library divided by the total number of checklist titles found in *BRI*) increased only by 1-2 percent for every library.

While 98 percent of the checklist titles from this study garnered at least one media review, 80 percent of the titles in Combs' study had one or more media reviews. Both studies did find that the library ownership percentage increased only marginally with at least one media review compared to ownership of titles from the respective complete checklists. Questions again arise from these results: are gay fiction and nonfiction materials reviewed in higher numbers than similar materials of lesbian interest? Is gay fiction reviewed in higher numbers than lesbian fiction? As in the previous findings in both studies, Columbus Metropolitan Library ranked first in holding the highest percentage of reviewed titles from each checklist, while Southwest ranked

last with the lowest percentage ownership of reviewed titles on each checklist.

Ninety-two percent of the checklist titles were reviewed in at least one of five journals used by librarians for selection decisions (Table 2). The percentages of titles with one or more reviews are calculated by taking the number of checklist titles owned by each library that received at least one review in any of five journals most used by selections librarians (as indicated by Moon, Serebnick and Quinn), divided by the total number of checklist titles reviewed in any of those five journals. Once again, the ownership percentage results are close to the previously discussed ownership percentages. Reviews in one or more of the five journals used for selection decisions produce very similar ownership percentages as those produced by reviews in one review in any media outlet. Consequently, just one review, either in any media outlet, or any of the five frequently used selection journals, produced negligible differences in ownership percentages compared to the original ownership percentages of the libraries reported in Table 1.

Table 2: Number of checklist titles owned by each library that had [1 or more] or [8 or more] reviews in *Booklist, Kirkus Reviews, Library Journal, NYTBR, and Publisher's Weekly.*

	INDIVIDUAL LIBRARY							
	Bexley	Columbus	Grandview	Southwest	U. Arlington	Westerville	Worthington	CONSORTIUM
Titles held w/1 or more reviews n=46	31	44	20	14	33	25	41	45
Percentage	67%	96%	43%	30%	72%	54%	89%	98%
Titles held w/8 or more reviews n=15	12	15	10	5	13	12	14	15
Percentage	80%	100%	67%	33%	87%	80%	93%	100%

In contrast with the previous findings, Table 2 data that are concerned with titles having eight or more reviews does support Serebnick's findings that there is a relationship between the number of reviews a title receives and its inclusion into a library's collection. Dramatically different ownership percentages emerge in four of the libraries when library holdings are compared to titles with eight or more reviews from journals used most often by selection librarians (checklist titles owned by each library that had eight or more reviews in the journals used most often for selection, divided by the total number of checklist titles with eight or more reviews in the same journals). Four of the seven individual libraries show double-digit increases in ownership percentages, while Southwest Public Library, Worthington and Columbus Metropolitan Library experienced only single-digit increases in percentage of ownership. Both Columbus Metropolitan and Worthington had very high ownership percentages of the fifty title checklist at the outset of the study, and as a result their ownership percentages increased minimally (Table 2). Only Southwest Public Library experienced a lack of increase with multiple reviews.

Subject heading access results are presented Table 3. The percentages of catalog titles for which subject heading access is provided range from 9-33 percent for the libraries studied. Patrons of Franklin County public libraries will have minimal success in finding gay fiction using the existing subject headings in the catalogs of these libraries. Ten different subject headings with combinations of "gay," "gays," and "fiction" were found, and are presented in Appendix D. Geographic subheadings account for most of the variance in the differing subject headings. The percentages were calculated by dividing the number of titles having subject access provided by the total number of checklist titles owned by the library. In the future, perhaps more subject headings will be assigned to gay fiction, and fiction in general, as a result of the changes that occurred in *LCSH* between the 19th and 20th editions.

Table 3: Checklist titles held by each library and the number of those monographs with assigned subject heading access for gay fiction.

	INDIVIDUAL LIBRARY							
	Bexley	Columbus	Grandview	Southwest	U. Arlington	Westerville	Worthington	CONSORTIUM
Total titles held	33	47	22	15	35	27	43	48
Titles with access pt. provided	9	14	2	3	10	6	14	14
Percentage	27%	30%	9%	20%	29%	22%	33%	30%

Table 4 presents a breakdown by the five journals regarding the number of reviews of each of the fifty titles from the checklist. Of the fifty title checklist, 52-82 percent of the titles were reviewed in the journals identified by Moon, Serebnick and Quinn. *Publisher's Weekly* reviewed the most titles, 41 (82 percent) of the fifty titles, while *The New York Times Book Review* had the fewest number of reviews at 26 (52 percent.) The percentages were calculated by dividing the number of reviews of the checklist title per journal by the number of checklist titles, or 50. From the results of this study, librarians concentrating on building gay fiction should consult *Publisher's Weekly* first, while *NYTBR* would provide the least value in selection of gay fiction.

Table 4: Five journals frequently used by selection librarians, according to Moon, Serebnick and Quinn, and the corresponding number of reviews of the checklist titles that appeared in each of the journals.

	JOURNAL				
Titles reviewed n=50	*Booklist*	*Kirkus Reviews*	*Library Journal*	*NYT Book Review*	*Publisher's Weekly*
Number	28	38	29	26	41
Percentage	56%	76%	58%	52%	82%

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The large gay male population residing in Franklin County will have varying degrees of success in locating gay fiction in each of the seven individual public library systems within the county. Columbus Metropolitan Library's collection is quite strong, missing only three titles out of fifty. One of the titles is from a small press (out of three published by small presses), and might explain its absence from the collection. Additionally, the consortium libraries represent forty-eight of the fifty titles. Five of the seven individual libraries had 54 percent or more of the titles. Southwest Public Library had only 30 percent of the fifty titles on the checklist, the lowest percentage of ownership. Since Southwest is part of the consortium with Columbus Metropolitan Library and Worthington Public Library, obviously access to gay fiction is greatly expanded for Southwest's patrons. Residents of Franklin County are generally not far from a location of Columbus Metropolitan Library, Worthington Public Library, or Southwest Public Library and seem well served for gay fiction, provided that this checklist is representational of the greater collection of gay fiction collected in these libraries.

Two of the seven individual libraries held less than 50 percent of the titles from the checklist. Southwest Public Library held 30 percent of the titles, and Grandview Heights Public Library held 44 percent. These low results might be indicative of bias towards the materials, censorship on the part of the librarians, lack of awareness that gay men live in the communities which the libraries serve, controversy avoidance and/or evidence of previous weeding. The poor representations are not due to difficulty in obtaining the materials or a lack of media reviews resulting in a lack of awareness. Ninety-two percent of the titles on the checklist were reviewed in at least one of the five journals most used by selections librarians. In addition, Southwest experienced a low percentage increase of checklist title ownership when looking at titles with eight or more reviews, indicative of a possible lack of commitment to hold these titles in their collection.

Subject access provided for works of gay fiction by the libraries in the study is weak and needs improvement in order for patrons to effectively use the catalogs for access to gay fiction. The percentages range from Grandview's 9 percent to Worthington's 33 percent of checklist

titles that have subject access directing patrons to gay fiction. Patrons would do well to rely on other sources for guidance to works of gay fiction. Hopefully, with the recent changes in *LCSH* regarding subject access to fictional works about classes of persons, this will improve subject access in the future. It us unfortunate that the existing body of gay fiction will probably remain largely inaccessible by subject through the catalogs, since these titles will more than likely not be reassigned subject headings that reflect these *LCSH* changes.

Suggestions for future research regarding collections of gay and lesbian materials are as follows: Are gay materials (fiction and nonfiction) collected in greater numbers than lesbian materials? Is gay fiction collected in greater numbers than lesbian fiction? Are gay materials (fiction and nonfiction) reviewed in greater numbers than lesbian materials? Is gay fiction reviewed in greater numbers than lesbian fiction? Are gay and lesbian young adult materials collected, and in what proportions to materials of adult gay and lesbian materials? Are libraries facilitating (limited) access to gay and lesbian materials by providing pathfinders or other bibliographic tools?

Since the universe of gay and lesbian library research literature is limited, and the dialog has been limited as well, it is hoped that exploration of these topics will help to expand the dialog and ultimately improve library services for gay and lesbian patrons in the future.

APPENDIX A

Franklin County Public Libraries

The Bexley Public Library, Bexley, Ohio

The Columbus Metropolitan Library (including 22 branch locations), Columbus, Ohio

The Grandview Heights Public Library, Grandview Heights, Ohio

The Southwest Public Library, including the Grove City Public Library, Grove City, Ohio

The Upper Arlington Public Library, Upper Arlington, Ohio

The Westerville Public Library, Westerville, Ohio

The Worthington Public Library, Worthington, Ohio

Columbus Metropolitan Library, Southwest Public Library, and Worthington Public Library act as a consortium by sharing their online catalogs and materials.

APPENDIX B

Checklist of gay fiction monographs, compiled from the preceding ten years of the Lambda Literary Awards.

Ardetti, Michael. *Pagan's Father*. New York: SoHo, 1996.
Barnette, Allan. *The Body and Its Dangers and Other Stories*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.
Bartlett, Neil. *House on Brooke Street*. New York: Dutton, 1996.
Bram, Christopyer. *Almost History*. New York: Dutton, 1992.
Bram, Christopher. *Father of Frankenstein*. New York: Dutton, 1995.
Bram, Christopher. *Gossip*. New York: Dutton, 1997.
Bram, Christopher. *In Memory of Angel Clare*. New York: Donald I. Fine, 1989.
Cooper, Dennis. *Closer*. New York: Grove, 1989.
Cooper, Dennis. *Frisk*. New York: Grove Widenfield, 1991.
Corbin, Steven. *Fragments That Remain*. Boston: Alyson, 1993.
Cunningham, Michael. *Flesh and Blood*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1995.
Cunningham, Michael. *Home at the End of the World*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1990.
Davis, Christopher. *Valley of the Shadow*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.
Dixon, Melvin. *Vanishing Rooms*. New York: Dutton, 1991.
Feinberg, David B. *Eighty-Sixed*. New York: Viking, 1989.
Ferro, Robert. *Second Son*. New York: Crown, 1988.
Gambone, Phillip. *The Language We Use Up Here*. New York: Dutton, 1991.
Gilgun, John. *Music I Never Dreamed Of*. New York: Amethyst Press, 1990.
Greene, Harlan. *What the Dead Remember*. New York: Dutton, 1991.
Grimsley, Jim. *Dream Boy*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin, 1995.
Gurganus, Allan. *Plays Well With Others*. New York: Knopf, 1997.
Hansen, Joseph. *Living Upstairs*. New York: Dutton, 1993.
Heim, Scott. *Mysterious Skin*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995.
Holleran, Andrew. *The Beauty of Men*. New York: Morrow, 1996.
Hollinghurst, Alan. *Folding Star*. New York: Pantheon, 1994.
Hollinghurst, Alan. *The Swimming Pool Library*. New York: Random House, 1988.
Huston, Bo. *Dream Life*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.
Huston, Bo. *The Listener*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1993.
Johnson, Fenton. *Scissors, Paper, Rock*. New York: Pocket, 1993.
Kenan, Randall. *Let the Dead Bury the Dead*. San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.
Killian, Kevin. *Shy*. Trumansburg, N.Y.: Crossing Press, 1989.
Leavitt, David. *A Place I've Never Been*. New York: Viking, 1990.
Manrique, Jamie. *Latin Moon In Manhattan*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.
Maupin, Armistead. *Sure of You*. New York: Harper & Row, 1989.
Merlis, Mark. *American Studies*. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

Monette, Paul. *Afterlife*. New York: Crown, 1990.
Monette, Paul. *Halfway Home*. New York: Crown, 1991.
Moore, Patrick. *Iowa*. New York: Hard Candy Press, 1996.
Olshan, Joseph. *Nightswimmer*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994.
Peck, Dale. *Law of Enclosures*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1996.
Peck, Dale. *Martin & John*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1993.
Picano, Felice. *Like People In History*. New York: Viking, 1995.
Raphael, Lev. *Winter Eyes*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.
Sadownick, Doug. *Sacred Lips of the Bronx*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.
Selvadurai, Shyam. *Funny Boy*. New York: Morrow, 1996.
Spender, Stephen. *The Temple*. New York: Grove, 1988.
Stollman, Areyh. *Far Euphrates*. New York: Putnam, 1997.
White, Edmund. *The Beautiful Room Is Empty*. New York: Knopf, 1988.
White, Edmund. *The Farewell Symphony*. New York: Knopf, 1997.
Wong, Norman. *Cultural Revolution*. New York: Persea Books, 1994.

APPENDIX C

Fifty title checklist, holdings of seven individual libraries and consortium, number of reviews in *Book Review Index*, and reviews in *Booklist, Kirkus Reviews, Library Journal, NYTBR, and Publisher's Weekly.*

Title	BX	CM	GV	SW	UA	WV	WO	CONS	*BRI*	5 selection journals
Afterlife	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	8	B,K,L,N,P
Almost History	H	H		H	A	H	H	H	6	B,K,L,P
American Studies		A			A		A	A	4	K,L,P
The Beautiful Room Is Empty	H	H	H		H		H	H	21	B,K,L,N,P
The Beauty of Men	A	A		A	A	A	A	A	3	L,N
The Body and Its Dangers		H					H	H	6	B,K,N,P
Closer		H						H	7	K,N,P
Cultural Revolution		A					A	A	9	K,L,N,P
Dream Boy	A	H		H	H	H	H	H	3	B,L,P
Dream Life		H					H	H	2	K,P
Eighty-Sixed	H	H			H		H	H	7	B,L,N,P
The Far Euphrates	H	H	H		H	H	H	H	8	B,K,L,N,P
The Farewell Symphony	A	A			A	A	A	A	13	B,K,L,N,P
Father of Frankenstein	H	H	H		H	H	H	H	9	B,K,N,P
Flesh and Blood		H	H		H	H		H	17	B,K,L,N,P
Folding Star	A	A			A	A	A	A	11	K,L,P
Fragments That Remain		A			A		A	A	5	P
Frisk		H					H	H	7	K,P
Funny Boy	H	H				H	H	H	5	B,L,P
Gossip	A	A	H	A	H	H	A	A	2	N
Halfway Home		H	H	H	H	H	H	H	8	B,K,N,P
Home at the End of the World	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	3	K,L,P
The House on Brooke Street	H	H			H			H	6	B,K,L,N,P
In Memory of Angel Clare		H	H		H		H	H	3	B,K,P
Iowa									0	

Title	BX	CM	GV	SW	UA	WV	WO	CONS	*BRI*	5 selection journals
Language We Use Up Here		A					A	A	6	B,K,L,P
Latin Moon In Manhattan	H	H	H		H	H	H	H	2	
Law of Enclosures	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	4	
Let the Dead Bury Their Dead	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	10	B,K,L,N,P
Like People In History		A	A		A	A	A	A	6	B,L,N,P
The Listener					A				2	K
Living Upstairs	A	H	H	H	H		H	H	4	B,K,P
Martin and John	H	A				H	A	A	13	K,L,N,P
Mysterious Skin		H	H	H	H	H	H	H	7	B,K,L,N,P
Music I Never Dreamed Of		H						H	1	
Nightswimmer	A	A			A	A	A	A	6	B,K,P
Pagan's Father	A	A	A		A	A	A	A	4	B,N
A Place I've Never Been	H	H	H		H	H	H	H	8	B,K,L,N,P
Plays Well With Others	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	9	B,K,L,N,P
Sacred Lips of the Bronx	A	A					A	A	5	B,K,L,P
Scissors, Paper, Rock	H	A	H	H		H	A	A	5	K,N,P
Second Son	H	H			H			H	7	B,K,L,N,P
Shy							H	H	2	K,P
Sure of You	H	H	H		H	H	H	H	6	B,K,L,N,P
The Swimming Pool Library	H	H		H	H	H	H	H	15	K,L,N,P
The Temple	H	H	H		H		H	H	19	B,K,L,N,P
Valley of the Shadow	H	H		H			H	H	5	B,K,L,P
Vanishing Rooms	H	H					H	H	5	K,L,P
What the Dead Remember	H	H			H		H	H	1	K
Winter Eyes	H	H			H		H	H	2	K,P
TOTAL 50 TITLES	33	47	22	15	35	27	43	48		327 REVIEWS

BX=Bexley Public Library
CM=Columbus Metropolitan Library
GV=Grandview Heights Public Library
SW=Southwest Public Library System
UA=Upper Arlington Public Library
WV=Westerville Public Library
WO=Worthington Public Library
CONS=Consortium (CML, Southwest, Worthington)

H=Title held by library
A=Title held by library and subject access point provided

28 Booklist
38 Kirkus Rev.
29 Library Jnl.
26 NYTBR
41 Pub. Weekly

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APPENDIX D

Subject Headings

Afro-American gays--Fiction
Fragments That Remain - CML, UA, WO
Gay fathers--England--Fiction
Pagan's Father - BX, CML, GV, UA, WV, WO
Gay men--Fiction
Almost History - UA
Farewell Symphony - BX, CML, UA, WO, WV
Gossip - BX, CML, SW, WO
Language We Use Up Here - CML, WO
Living Upstairs - BX
Martin and John - CML, WO
Scissors, Paper, Rock - CML, SW, WO
Gay men--Belgium--Flanders--Fiction
Folding Star - BX, CML, UA, WV, WO
Gay men--California--Los Angeles--Fiction
Listener - UA
Sacred Lips of the Bronx - BX, CML, WO
Gay men--England--Fiction
Folding Star - BX, CML, UA, WV, WO
Gay men--Psychology--Fiction
Beauty of Men - BX, CML, SW, UA, WV, WO
Gay men--United States--Fiction
American Studies - CML, UA, WO
Cultural Revolution - CML
Fragments That Remain - CML, UA, WO
Like People in History - CML, GV, UA, WV, WO
Nightswimmer - BX, CML, UA, WV, WO
Gay teenagers--Southern States--Fiction
Dream Boy - BX
Gay youth--Hawaii--Fiction
Cultural Revolution - CML, WO

Library key: BX=Bexley, CML=Columbus Metropolitan Library, GV=Grandview, SW=Southwest, UA=Upper Arlington, WV=Westerville, WO=Worthington

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